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A FILIPINO EVANGELIST



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By

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ABOUT sixteen years ago in the Philippine Islands Paulino Zamora, a Filipino, became anxious to secure a Protestant Bible, but there was none to be had in all the islands. After some time he succeeded in getting a portion of the Bible from the captain of a Spanish ship, and began to study it. About twelve years ago the British and Foreign Bible Society sent two agents to the Philippine Islands. They were poisoned, probably at the instigation of the friars, in the Manila Hotel De Orienti. One of them died, but the other escaped. Paulino Zamora received from them a complete Bible and some instructions. He knew that he could not, if it were known, keep a Bible in his home in Manila, and therefore for the purpose of studying it he moved out in the province of Bulacan, some distance from Manila, and there continued his Bible study.

Through faith in the truth he found in the Bible he entered into as definite an experience of justification by faith as Martin Luther did when climbing the stairs of St. Peter's on his knees.

THE CRIME OF OWNING A BIBLE.

Paulino Zamora rejoiced in his new experience and invited some neighbors to study the Bible with him, and it soon became known to the friars that a Protestant Bible was in his possession. One evening, about sunset, his house was surrounded by the police; he was arrested, a search was made, the Bible found, and he was taken to Manila and cast into the Billibid prison. I tried to enter one of those unventilated dungeons in a Spanish prison near Manila, but found the stench so strong I soon retreated; and yet the Spanish prisoners were compelled to exist for years in those vile dungeons. Zamora was soon, without a trial, banished to an island in the Mediterranean Sea.

Paulino Zamora had a brother who was a professor in the chief Roman Catholic college in Manila. He had also a son called Nicholas; and when the father was ban-

ished the uncle took the nephew and put him into a college and educated him for the Roman Catholic priesthood.

During the year 1898, in the provision of God for the religious liberty of the Filipino people, three events occurred: (1) Paulino Zamora returned to Manila, (2) Nicholas Zamora, his son, graduated with honors for the priesthood from a Roman Catholic college; and (3) the American flag floated over Manila.

CONVERSION OF THE YOUNG PRIEST.

During all the years of his college course, Nicholas had been anxious and curious to see the book for which his father had been banished. When they came together in Manila under the protection of the American flag the father, unhindered, taught his son the Protestant Bible and led him into a clear experience of personal salvation, without the intercession of the Roman Catholic priests.

During the month of July, 1899, the Rev. Arthur Prautch, a Methodist local preacher, who had an institute in Manila for American soldiers, announced in the Spanish papers that the following Sunday there would

be a Protestant service in the Spanish language in the Soldiers' Institute. Mr. Prautch secured an interpreter at four dollars (Mexican) an hour, and twelve persons were present. They continued thus to meet for three Sundays, and on the fourth Sunday the audience had grown to an attendance of thirty, but the interpreter did not appear. Paulino Zamora and his son Nicholas were in the audience. Mr. Prautch, not knowing Spanish, said to Paulino: "Will you speak?" The courageous old man stood up, and though he had stood alone for religious liberty in the Philippine Islands for years, and though he had suffered banishment and the loss of property, he could not speak publicly. There are many good people in the Christian church, for whom we thank God, who are not preachers or public speakers.

THE FIRST SERMON.

When the trembling old man failed to speak to the people he turned to Nicholas and said: "Nicholas, you try." Nicholas sprang quickly to his feet, opened his Bible, read with great enthusiasm the passages his father had taught him and told the people

the way he had found peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, without the intercession of the priests; he showed that all priestly intercession was unnecessary, that the way of life was made plain in the Word of God, and denounced in a vigorous manner the friars for the way they had taught the Filipino people. Nicholas reminds one of Spurgeon in his physical form, religious enthusiasm, and fluency of speech. Mr. Prautch saw quickly that Nicholas was a God-chosen and prepared instrument, and said: "Nicholas, will you speak again next Sunday?" Nicholas replied: "It will give me pleasure."

Mr. Pautch wisely announced that on the following Sunday Nicholas Zamora would preach in the institute in the Spanish language. This news spread rapidly over the city, got into the daily papers, and the next Sunday there was a crowd. Nicholas continued from Sunday to Sunday, and the crowd increased, and in February, 1900, when Bishop Thoburn and I arrived in Manila Nicholas was preaching in seven different centers to good audiences and was one of the most widely known, best loved and hated man in Manila.

A WIDE-SPREADING WORK.

We found some hundreds of people who had become Protestants, but there was no ordained minister of our mission in the Philippine Islands to administer the sacraments. A quarterly conference was organized, made up of our missionaries and laymen from America, and the wisdom of ordaining Nicholas Zamora was carefully considered. It was conceded that he was a good man, educated, married, converted, eloquent, knew his Bible, and abundantly qualified to preach. It was objected that he did not know Methodism, and that, therefore, it would be absurd to ordain him as a Methodist preacher. I said: "I am going to remain in Manila for a month, and if that is the only objection I will teach him Methodism," and with that promise he was recommended for ordination.

In the Methodist church, before a man can be ordained, he must be elected to orders by the vote of an annual conference. There was no annual conference in session in all the Eastern World. The quarterly conference, however, recommended him; Bishop Thoburn cabled it to the mission

rooms, New York. Dr. Leonard was at the South Kansas Conference, which was in session, Bishop Vincent presiding. The cablegram was forwarded to Dr. Leonard brought it to the attention of the conference, which received Nicholas Zamora on trial and elected him to deacon's orders. The action of the South Kansas Conference was cabled to Manila, and in the Soldiers' Home, a room with a dusty floor, without a pulpit or an altar, and with only a few rough chairs, Bishop Thoburn ordained Nicholas Zamora, the first Protestant minister in the Philippine Islands.

THE ORDINATION SERVICE.

Zamora's aged father sat in the audience, and when the ordination was over the old man rushed forward, threw his arms around Bishop Thoburn and hugged him and wept on his neck, and tremblingly quoted in the Spanish language the very words of Simeon: "God, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." How kind and wise the Providence that permitted the trembling old man, who had suffered for religious liberty and

who had been imprisoned and banished and who had led his own son into a clear Christian experience, to see that very son ordained the first Protestant minister in the Philippine Islands. I esteemed it one of the greatest privileges of my life to be present and to assist in that ordination.

The work has grown, due largely to the work of Nicholas Zamora, until at the present about 1,500 persons have been baptized and taken into the Methodist church and 300 couples have received Protestant marriages, indicating their final break with Romanism.

Under the leadership of Nicholas the first Protestant church in the Philippine Islands was built and largely paid for by the Filipino Protestant Christians, and in August, 1900, on my way from the General Conference I had the great privilege and honor of dedicating as a Methodist church the first Protestant church in the Philippine Islands.

Later, about four miles from Manila, at a place called Malabai, about four hundred people became Protestants, and for some time they held their services in the Roman Catholic church.

On Good Friday Nicholas preached in the forenoon to about six hundred people. They were greatly edified and asked him to preach again in the afternoon of the same Sunday. The church had not been seated by the Roman Catholics, but the Protestants had put in bamboo-pole seats, and on a hot afternoon Nicholas preached for four hours and about six hundred people remained almost breathless, hanging upon the words of life that fell from his lips. He preached from the seven sayings of Christ on the cross, and from them exposed the errors of Romanism and taught their true meaning to the people.

THE BISHOP'S PUPIL.

As I said, I promised to teach Nicholas Methodism. I do not know how much he learned about Methodism, but I learned much about Romanism. We studied the doctrines and the rules of our church, and he was greatly interested. I said to him: "You must have Sunday schools and teach the Bible to the children." With knitted brow and darkened countenance he said: "Do you mean to tell me that I must teach the Bible to little children. I thought I

had gone a great way in teaching it to adult laymen?" I then told him the facts about Sunday schools in Protestant countries; and as the idea of thus educating the children dawned upon him, his countenance changed, brightened into a smile, indicating intelligent understanding; and, retaining his Roman Catholic phraseology, he sprang up, caught my hands and said: "Father Warne, when you come back you will find our children in Sunday schools." I told him to teach the people to have family worship, and I went through the same experience of seeing his brow knit, his countenance darken, and he asked: "Do you mean to say that I must teach laymen to read the Bible in their homes and explain it to their children? Have I not gone a long way in consenting myself to teach it to the laity?" I then told him the story of family worship and Bible study in Protestant homes, and again his countenance brightened and he caught me again by the hands and said: "Father Warne, when you come back we will have family worship among our people."

They now have in Manila Sunday schools and family worship, and, in addition, prayer

meetings, class meetings, Bible schools, open-air preaching, Epworth Leagues, quarterly and district conferences and a fully organized Methodist church. Is this not one evidence that God was preparing a man to preach the truth as soon as political and religious liberty was given to the Philippine Islands, and a new evidence that God is using the wars of our times for the evangelization of the nations? Let Christians take new courage in believing that "The Lord Reigneth."